

# Shameless Extravagance

## The First Symptom of the War Disease!

**Voluptuous Dances, Unbridled Profligacy and Luxury Always the Beginnings of "Racial Malady" Whose Crisis Is Wholesale Slaughter!**

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EVERY great war has been preceded by a period of profligacy, of brilliant and wickedly extravagant entertainment, of devotion to voluptuous dancing and shameless and reckless luxury.

Living in the midst of it, the average man has little power to realize this world-wide luxury by comparing it with the simplicity of other days. The sociologist can render a service to civilization by impressing on the nations the enormity of this extravagance. It has prevailed no less in America than in Europe. The expenditures on public amusements in the civilized countries have alone reached an amount that is staggering, but they are perhaps less significant than the craze for more demoralizing and unwholesome indulgences.

Of especial significance is the dancing mania, which has affected the whole civilized world in recent years. Dancing is a recreation which, though beneficial when enjoyed in moderation, easily leads to the most demoralizing excesses and extravagances. The close contact of persons in the intoxicating rhythm of the dance, aided by the consumption of wine and other causes of excitement, will work havoc with the ordinary restraints of social life.

In England there has been a mania for public costume balls, where costliness has vied with immodesty in the adornment of the dancers. At public balls English duchesses in the garb of Thais and other sirens of mythology have thrown themselves into the arms of strange men costumed as pirates and pashas. At such public affairs as the Covent Garden costume ball, the largest theatre in London, has been filled with 5,000 gorgeously attired people of all ranks of society, from the peerage to the saloon-keeping class, who have mingled indiscriminately.

The expenditures at such affairs have been enormous. Women of ancient family vie with the wives and favorites of new capitalists in piling fortunes on their shoulders. A woman with \$200,000 worth of pearls around her neck was picked up unconscious by a poor waiter after such an affair. The traditional modesty of English society has been thrown to the winds, but their excesses have not surpassed those of the other civilized nations.

The danger of the dancing craze has been clearly pointed out and emphasized by my colleague, Professor Hugo Muensterberg, in his last book.

"Can we deny," he says, "that this recent craze, which, like a dancing mania, has whirled over the country, is a significant expression of deep cultural changes which have come to America? Only ten years ago such a



A Drawing in an English Illustrated Paper of the Last Fancy Dress Ball at Covent Garden, London, in Which the Beauty and Nobility of England Surpassed Themselves in Extravagance and Reckless Gaiety. Such Fetes Were Also Common in Berlin and Paris Just Before the War.



Is THIS the First Symptom of THIS?

A Battery of the English Royal Field Artillery at St. Quentin, France. Many of the Officers Killed Here Had Only a Few Weeks Before Participated in the Covent Garden Revels.

dancing fever would have been impossible. People danced, but they did not take it seriously. It was set off from life and not allowed to penetrate it. "No one can doubt that true dangers are near whenever the dancing habit is prominent. The dance is a bodily movement which aims at no practical purpose, and is thus not bound to outer necessities. It is simply self-expression, and this gives to the dancing impulse the liberty which easily becomes licentiousness. Two mental conditions help in that direction; the mere

movement as such produces increased excitement, and the excitement re-enforces the movement, and so the dance has in itself the tendency to become quicker and wilder and more and more unrestrained." Dancing is, of course, not the only alarming form of social extravagance, although it is the most conspicuous. Excess in eating, drinking, dress and other forms of indulgence has become universal among the well-to-do classes. We hear of a banquet in Berlin where the decorations reproduce the Golden House of Nero. In

Paris a fantastic midnight banquet is held in a swimming pool.

It is especially significant that Germany, which used to be the land of simple living, has become as deeply addicted to extravagance as the others. While immodesty has become general in English society, excesses in eating and drinking are the prevailing sin of Germany. It is common to hear of feasts that cost \$100,000 in Berlin. The "water cure" resorts, like Marienbad, where people try to recover from the effects of excessive eating and drinking, have in recent years been overcrowded with visitors.

Many forms of social excess in Germany have only been hinted at. There were strange reports concerning the fantastic feasts of that great multi-millionaire, Alfred Krupp, before his mysterious death. The entertainments of that peculiar ornament of Berlin's aristocratic society, Count Philipp von Eulenberg, will also be recalled by many.

It may seem absurd to my American readers to speak of the demoralization of Paris, because they have always regarded it as the delightful incarnation of wickedness, but the truth is that the demoralization of Paris has reached a new stage. The separation of the virtuous and the disreputable classes no longer exists. The wickedness which was once a spectacle has now become part of the life of the nation.

That most acute observer of French social life, M. Octave Uzanne, has described better than any one the demoralization which has come over French society. All this, mark you, is essentially the result of extravagance, for it is the insatiable desire for luxury that makes virtue a cheap commodity. In his recent book, "The Modern Parisienne," M. Uzanne says:

"For nearly forty years a great change has been taking place in social customs, tending

to a vague confusion between the demi-monde and the higher classes. The left-hand queens elbow those of the right hand, and the latter imitate the manners, tone and fashions of the former, and sometimes even take a leaf out of their book. They meet secretly to exchange confidences about a husband or a lover. They consider themselves in the light of rivals and meet at charity bazaars, races and hotel tea parties. They employ the same dressmaker and milliner."

It will be well to prove by a few historical instances that great calamitous wars have already been preceded by a period of unbridled extravagance. The typical illustration is the fall of Babylon, whose doom, as related in the Bible, was announced to King Belshazzar in the midst of his wanton reveling by the prophet Daniel.

The collapse of the Roman Empire was, of course, heralded by the most tremendous and long continued era of luxury the world has ever known. The catastrophe was due to the influx of those barbarians who had long been plundered by the Romans, and who had therefore contributed to their luxury.

To turn to a different period of history, we find that the French Revolution was preceded by the extraordinary extravagances of the French Court and aristocracy during the eighteenth century. That was the age of the Pompadours and Du Barrys and of King Louis XV's unspeakable revels at the Parc-aux-cerfs.

The Franco-Prussian War of 1870 was heralded by the glitter and license of Napoleon III's tinsel empire. It would be wearisome to enumerate all the cases where great social extravagance has introduced a great war. Such excesses are invariably the beginnings of a racial malady whose crisis is wholesale slaughter.

It must be remembered that the extravagance of the last few years has far exceeded that of any of the historical periods mentioned. In those earlier periods the mass of the people lived simply and roughly. To-day the craving for luxury has infected every class of society, down to workmen and peasants. This point has been well brought out by my friend, Professor Guglielmo Ferrero, of Rome, in his last work.

Why should extravagance lead to war? Is not war the one thing that must end the luxury with which the people are infatuated? The answer to these questions is that extravagance produces greed, which leads to war. Those who are mad for luxury seek ever more and more wealth to satiate their desires. One country desires the rich colonies of its neighbor. Another country wishes to flourish the world-embracing commerce of its rival. The jewelled costume balls of London excite the envy of those who give Sardanapalian feasts in Berlin. The wealth which has made such extravagance possible has also made possible the accumulation of vast armaments. The logical outcome of such conditions must be that one nation will use its arms to seize the wealth of its neighbor.

The lesson which the philosopher will draw from these facts is that if we wish to put an end to war we must return to simple living and high moral ideals. War will not be ended by an agreement to limit armaments. It will only be ended by the consciousness of every man that luxury is not a thing worth fighting for.

## Why Golf Makes People Egotistical Melancholy Nervous Wrecks

By An English Golfer. (In The English Review)

THE "silliness" of golf has become a leading question. I, too, am a golfer, an enthusiast; I cannot conceive of the Sabbath without my two rounds; for two days at least every week, wife, kids, work, duty, interest, affection, ties, public or domestic, cease to exist.

Like a great many golfers, I find I have developed neurasthenic tendencies, which the more I seek to dispel by the great open-air cure of golf, the less I am able to shake off. My doctor declares neurasthenia to be the pathological symptom of the game. The vexations, the constant irritations, the disappointments, the concentration demanded, the eye strain exacted, the nervous tension involved, the mental stress and "draw" necessitated by this battle between the imperfections of humanity and the mechanical perfection aimed at, the moral energy dissipated, the artificial passivity of temperament which is essential, the sheer egotism, egotism, egomania, set up automatically by a game dependent solely upon one's own skill and the retroactive depression caused inevitably by failure at it—these things, my doctor asserts, conduce to a peculiar morbid action upon the nervous system, resulting in a more or less chronic condition of sub-acute melancholia.

For some strange reason the camaraderie of golf leads to a silliness which becomes chronic. It evokes

the old schoolboy spirit. The very terminology of the game makes for a form of imbecility.

I know at least a dozen men who have ruined their careers through golf—"taken it up," you know, the neglect of everything else. Its effects on the brain, too, are pronounced. As only a man with a wooden temperament can ever hope to excel in a game which demands mechanical precision, so the deadening effect on players is indisputable. You cannot play golf and think of other things. For the time, the mind must be a vacuum, and the deader it is, probably the better you will play. As sport for our boys, I should say golf was the worst game possible. Being purely selfish, it discourages esprit de corps. It is not a game demanding bravery, strategy, or any of the fine qualities brought out by football, cricket, polo, or any team game necessitating team cohesion, intelligence, co-partnership, unselfishness, bravery, self-sacrifice, dash, exercise and condition. The indispensable qualities for the golfer are self-command, machine-like precision.

To pretend that golf brings out fine qualities in men is to condemn all other games, seeing that golf is a trial of virtuosity in the individual, whereas all other games are active aggressive, because played against opposition. Training a boy to keep his eye on the ball may be useful as a first guide to the use of discipline, but it cannot develop the fighting qualities in him, stir him

to noble thoughts, to deeds of heroism, adventure, self-sacrifice, or any other idea much beyond the parochialism of the game; and, upon the mind, I contend that golf is directly and necessarily blighting.

If games are educational, then golf has no more educational value than billiards, which demands much the same disposition, application, and "touch." The only quality I can discover educationally in golf is the stimulus it gives to singleness of purpose, and this, unquestionably, is a quality.

To every man who plays golf, one caddie in the lower strata is created, so that if on any given Saturday 200,000 men are playing golf, 200,000 caddies, too, are employed, forming a joint army of 400,000 men, the one-half chasing a ball, the other moiety helping the former in pursuit.

We talk about the unemployed, but here is an army of loafing men and boys—for that is the truth about them as we may readily perceive by applying the test—"Would you like your son to be a caddie?"—created by the rich for the purpose of amusement, paid very badly, too, to do nothing in life but carry sticks for all sorts of bungling, fooling, footling gentlemen who, as often as not, curse them.

This caddie breed is not likely to do much off the links; that is certain. It is getting larger and larger. As the game grows, and municipal golf becomes popular, so will the army of caddie inefficient grow, to the general degeneration of society.